North Eastern Council in Assam

2355. SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 25 years ago Government had established North Eastern Council in Guwahati in Assam State;

(b) if so, what are the basic objectives in establishing the Council;

(c) whether any review has been made to know how far the objectives have been achieved; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI P. M. SAYEED): (a) The North Eastern Council (NEC) was established in 1972 at Shillong under the North Eastern Council Act, 1971.

(b) The basic objectives and functions for which the NEC was set up has been inter alia to advise and make recommendations and also implement projects which are regional and inter-state in nature in the fields of economic and social planning, transport and communications, power etc. for overall balanced development and security of the North Eastern area.

(c) and (d) The North Eastern Council is a high level statutory body with the Governors and Chief Ministers of the North Eastern States as its Members. The Council reviews its activities in its meetings. The Council has held 38 meetings since its inception in August, 1972. The Council has funded schemes for over Rs. 2197 crores since its inception for construction and improvement of roads, hydro-electric projects and transmission lines, human resource development, agriculture and social and community services etc.

Recognising the services of Freedom Fighters

2356. SHRI BHUPINDER SINGH MANN: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of freedom fighters as are yet pending to be recognised by Government for their services rendered during the freedom struggle:

(b) by when their requests would be considered: and

(c) the reasons for not considering their requests so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI P. M. SAYEED): (a) to (c) As a token of the Nation's gratitude and in recognition of the services rendered by the freedom fighters during the freedom struggle, the Central Government grants the freedom fighters' pension to the persons who fulfil the eligibility criteria laid down under the Swatantraia Sainik Samman Pension Scheme. All timely claims for grant of pension have been considered at least once and appropriate decisions already communicated to the applicants. Aggrieved with the decision of the Government regarding rejection of claims, the applicants keep on sending review petitions/representations. If the applicants furnish some additional acceptable documentary evidence along with such review petitions, such cases are reconsidered and pension sanctioned. As on 30-11-1994, only 17 fresh claims received recently were pending. While every possible effort is made to communicate the decision to the applicants on their claims in the shortest possible time, receipt and disposal of claims for pension even after the out of date being a continuous process, no definite time frame can be laid down for disposal of claims for pension.

Report of Human Rights Watch Group

2357. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the International "Human Rights Watch Group" has recently observed the militants and their supports in Jammu and Kashmir of grave violation of international humanitarian law by killing Government servants, civilians, members of minority community and using religious places for militant activities, as per the newsitem in the Hindustan Times, dated 23rd November 1994, entitled: "Human Rights Group Indicts J & K Militants, for violations";

(b) if so, the facts in this regard; and

(c) what is the reaction of the Central Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI RAJESH PILOT): (a) and (b) Human Rights Watch/Asia, in its report titled "INDIA: ARMS AND ABUSES IN INDIAN PUNJAB AND KASHMIR" has observed, inter-alia, that diffusion of advanced small arms and weapons to the militants by the Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) through the "Afghan Pipeline" has seriously affected the human rights situation in Punjab and Kashmir. It has further observed that most of these weapons transferred by Pakistan to Afghan Mujahideen have resurfaced in the hands of militants in Punjab and Kashmir which has led to serious violations of international laws of war including direct attacks on unarmed civilians, indiscriminate attacks, summary executions and kidnappings.

(c) The Government have consistently been bringing to the notice of international